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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST: FRANCE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE
GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE

11. This is an action request. See paragraph 5.

12. SUMMARY. In 2006 there were serious setbacks in the global fight to end polio with the increased numbers of polio cases in Nigeria and India, continuing challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and imported cases appearing in countries previously declared polio-free. There is a critical \$60 million funding gap for 2007 and \$355 million for 2008 for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). France contributed a total of USD \$23.8 million during the period 2003-2005 and \$12.8 million in 2006. Please slug responses for OES/IHB (Tierra Copeland and Patricia Murphy). END SUMMARY

13. BACKGROUND: Substantial progress has been made since the launch of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) in 1988, when polio was endemic in more than 125 countries, paralyzing 350,000 children each year. The GPEI partnership includes the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Rotary International, and U.S. Government agencies (USAID and the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HHS/CDC). The U.S. Government has been the leading financial donor to the effort providing over \$1.3 billion since 1988 and representing nearly thirty percent of the global contributions.

14. As noted by U/S Dobriansky in a policy speech on polio, significant progress has been made globally; however, there have been recent setbacks that put eradication efforts at risk. In 2006, 1,998 people were paralyzed by polio and now only four countries (Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan) still suffer from endemic polio transmission. Global polio eradication is feasible. However, donor enthusiasm and financial contributions in the global polio eradication efforts are waning, even in the face of re-emerging infections and increasing risk for polio to regain a global foothold. Challenges facing the polio eradication effort include:

-- There is a major global funding gap of \$60 million for GPEI to support vaccination campaigns and emergency operations in outbreak areas for the remainder of 2007. A shortage of polio funds needed for 2007 will result in a negative cash flow which would potentially produce an immediate reduction of polio eradication activities in the remaining infected countries: Nigeria, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In addition, temporary cutbacks will result in re-infection of polio-free areas, an increase in polio paralyzed children, delays in outbreak response, and an increase in overall costs. It is estimated that there is a shortfall of pledges of, at least, \$355 million for eradication activities projected for 2008.

-- During the 2004-2005 period, polio spread from Northern Nigeria and India to 21 previously polio-free across the Middle East and as far east as Indonesia.

-- Spread of polio has increased in 2006, with twice as many polio cases in five states in Northern Nigeria, and five times as many cases in India compared to the same period in 2005.

-- The remaining areas and populations of polio infections and transmission are among the poorest of the poor and are the most difficult to reach.

-- Socio-political issues have complicated vaccination efforts. For example, in the critical areas of India and Nigeria, there is great distrust of government and government programs, and resistance to vaccination, particularly among Muslim communities.

-- Political will on the part of the governments of Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan is being severely tested to follow through on commitments to polio eradication in their respective countries.

15. ACTION: Embassy is requested to urge senior Foreign Affairs, Health, and Finance Ministry officials that France consider increasing its support for the WHO and UNICEF-led Polio Eradication Initiative, including an additional contribution for 2008-2009. Embassy may draw on the following talking points:

Begin Talking Points

-- The United States is very concerned that given the continued endemic transmission of polio in Nigeria, India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, a threat remains for importation to polio-free countries.

-- We are at a critical point in global efforts to eradicate polio. We are urging the four endemic countries to strengthen their efforts to eradicate polio and close gaps that have allowed the number of cases to expand.

-- The United States acknowledges and appreciates France's exemplary past contributions to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. There is an urgent \$60 million funding gap for the remainder of 2007 and \$355 million for 2008 for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI).

-- The United States has given generously -- \$132 million in 2007 alone and we are urging our partners to help close the funding gap.

End Talking Points

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